PAPYROLOGICA BRUXELLENSIA
— 28 —

A COMPANION TO DEMOTIC STUDIES

Mark DEPAUW

BRUXELLES
Fondation Égyptologique Reine Élisabeth
1997

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FONDATION ÉGYPTOLOGIQUE REINE ELISABETH

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A Companion to Demotic Studies

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To the Memory of Jan Quuegebeur

Preface

One of the main obstacles for newcomers to the promising field of Demotic studies has been the lack of scientific tools, such as a handbook. In default of a general survey, information about the Demotic language and script, and about the texts written in it, was hard to trace, and as a result the information provided was often neglected by scholars studying the later periods of Egyptian culture and history. The need for an introduction to Demotic, as a counterpart to manuals of Greek papyrology and Egyptology, was therefore expressed several times.

It should be stressed here that this *Companion* is only a partial fulfilment of this need. It is of a more limited scope than some of its Greek counterparts, the main difference being that the culture of late pharaonic, Ptolemaic, or Roman Egypt is not discussed *in extenso*. No doubt it would be very instructive to give a survey of these topics including information gained from the Demotic sources. However, since Demotic script and language stretch from the seventh century BC to the fifth century AD, this would be a huge undertaking which is beyond my competence, especially because it would be quite useless to study the history of any period exclusively on the basis of Demotic sources. The precise goal of this *Companion* is to make Demotic studies more accessible so that Greek papyrologists or Egyptologists interested in the later periods will be better equipped to take full account of Demotic material in their study of the late pharaonic period or the Ptolemaic and Roman societies. As such it does not contain an introduction to script or grammar.

The foundations of this book were laid in 1993, when the late Professor J. Quaegebeur asked me to update and revise the introductory notes of his course 'Demotic'. The goal was to provide beginning students with a kind of handbook, permitting a faster transition to grammar and the texts themselves. He urged me to elaborate the Dutch version and to consider a translation into English in view of a future publication. It is very sad that because of his untimely death he has not been able to witness the final result. Several people have advised and assisted me in his place, thus trying to fill the gap he left. In the first place I should like to express my thanks to Professor W. Clarysse, who read through two previous versions of the manuscript, enriched them with his comments, and supported me at times when I doubted I would bring the task to a good end. I am also very grateful to Professors P. Frandsen and H. De Meulenaere, who read through the work and provided valuable remarks and suggestions. As president of the *Fondation Egyptologique Reine Elisabeth*, the latter, together with his colleague Professor J. Bingen, was also willing to include this *Companion* in the series *Papyrologica Bruxellensia*, for which I wish to thank them both. I am further indebted to Professors W.J. Tait and R. Jasnow, who each at different stages emended the English of this publication; to Professor M. Smith, who kept me from several defects in the section on the Demotic literature; to Professor M. Chauveau, who urged me to add the succinct section on the historical information in Demotic texts, which I had been contemplating; to Professors K.-Th. Zauzich and D. Devauchelle; to Dr. Hoffmann, Dr. E. Cruz-Uribe, Dr. L. Limme, and K. Ryholt, for assistance and advice on various matters. And last but not least I wish to thank the *Papyrological Institute of the University of Leiden*, where a

fundamental critique caused me to revise and enlarge the present work and alter its title. The shortcomings remain of course entirely my own responsibility.

Finally, I must say that I am well aware of the fact that it may be considered an act of hybris to publish a book of this kind with the limited experience I have at this time of my life. To my excuse I can only refer to the circumstances described above: it is my hope that the work will be useful enough to avert any *nemesis*. May I not too strongly disappoint the *ôt* of Professor Jan Quaegebeur, without whose encouragement this *Companion* would never have been realized and to whom I dedicate the book in sincere admiration.

Brussels, 17 December 1996

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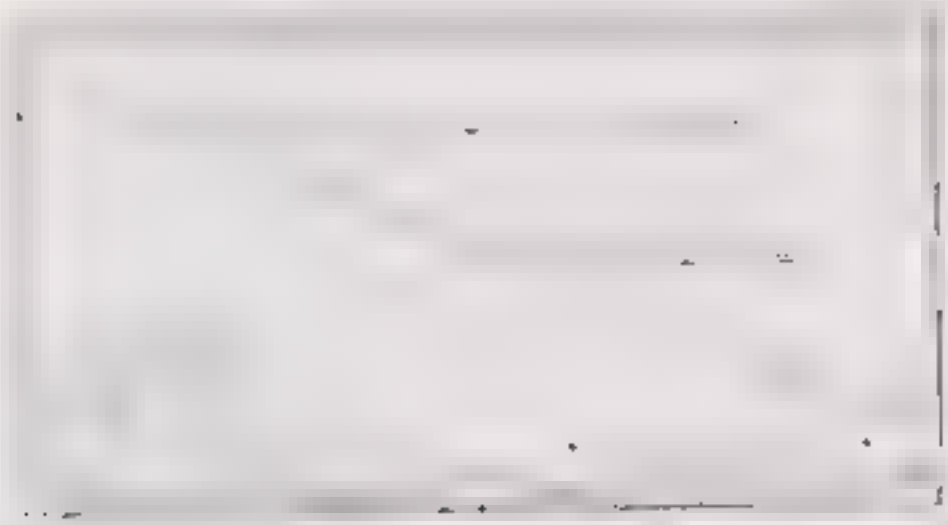

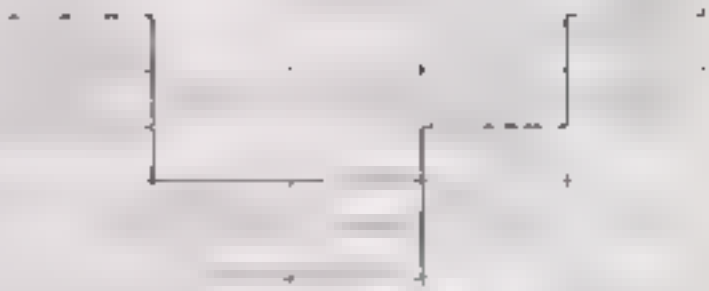

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